

Sale Name: Important Indigenous Fine Art Auction Sept. 6th 2023

LOT 60 - Juanisialuk Irqumia - Dog Attacking Bear 13/40



Artist Description Juanisialuk Irqumia ᐃᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕᓕ (1917 – 1977 Indigenous / CAD)

One of the original inhabitants of Puvirnituk. An introverted person, Irqumia preferred to carve & draw alone at home. He carved directly onto his stone-blocks, without the aid of a drawing. Families, birds, hunting scenes, and people at work were favourite subjects for Irqumia. Firmly rooted in realism, his work rarely addresses Inuit mythology. A participant in the fateful "migration" often depicted in fellow artist Joe Talirunili's sculptures, Irqumia was one of 40 people once stranded on a melting ice floe. Many people drowned during the ordeal, including Irqumia's sister Annie and her two children. The survivors were adrift at sea for several days before they reached land. Irqumia was said to have suffered from a rare affliction known as "kayak anxiety," probably a form of agoraphobia that caused him to become disoriented in open spaces. He did not go out in a kayak in open water for fear of losing consciousness and drowning. Perhaps this anxiety also influenced his artistic practice; scholars noted that "he avoids an open plane by using the boundary of the stone or landscape to circumscribe his subjects. His prints always have more than one figure . . . all firmly anchored in defined space" (Mitchell 1975:13). Irqumia's work has been exhibited at the international level in important venues in New York, Germany, and Sweden. His work has also been exhibited widely throughout North America and is included in some of the country's best collections of Inuit art. Although it is quite likely that

Irqumia began carving prior to 1956, few examples from this time period exist. His carvings from the 1960s are particularly accomplished, however, and suggest a certain maturity as an artist. Irqumia's family scenes, which are particularly poignant, often incorporate a sophisticated use of negative space. Figures stand clearly defined as individuals by the space surrounding them, although family members may embrace or work side by side. Typically, each piece is carved from one stone, with individual elements linked by a common base. Primarily a carver at the beginning of his career, Irqumia did not begin to work with stonecut prints until 1962. That year, under the leadership of a new technical advisor, Victor Tinkl, the Povungnituk Co-operative undertook printmaking as a profit-generating venture. With assistance from the Canadian Eskimo Arts Council, the first-ever collection of Puvirnituk prints was released to the public alongside the annual Cape Dorset collection. Easily transferring his skills as a carver to the more two-dimensional nature of preparing stone-blocks for printing, Irqumia's printwork was competent from the onset. Similar to his beautifully carved sculptures of people at work, Irqumia's prints often feature people as they go about their daily chores: men hunt; women dry skins; families travel across the land in search of food. Unlike his figurative carvings, however, Irqumia's prints intermittently feature animated compositions of various animals devoid of human presence. His lyrical depictions of caribou are especially noteworthy, and are reminiscent of the elegant stags and unicorns featured in medieval tapestries. The stonecut medium also allowed for the integration of more detailed elements into Irqumia's work. For example, clothing details and landscape elements such as waves and grasses are denoted by carefully etched lines in the original stone block, as are elaborate facial expressions. Perhaps driven to include explanatory textual elements for the sake of posterity, Irqumia also began to include syllabic descriptions in many of his prints. Working consistently until 1976, one year before his passing, Irqumia's latest pieces are especially didactic. Irqumia's work was presented to a public audience with the first annual release of the Puvirnituk Print Collection in 1962. One of 24 artists chosen to represent Puvirnituk in this landmark print release, nine of Irqumia's prints were selected. His work was featured regularly in these releases until his death in 1977, and posthumously in 1980. Irqumia's carvings first gained attention in 1967, when his work was included in the groundbreaking exhibition, The Eskimo Art Collection of the Toronto-Dominion Bank. Conceived as a celebration of Canada's centennial, the show was curated by experts in the field who sought to assemble "the best collection possible" (Ribkoff 2011).

Description

Stonecut 13/40 - Puvirnituk Co-op

Titled, Numbered, Dated & Signed Across Lower Border

Sheet - 10.5 ins x 10.5 ins (26.67 cm x 26.67 cm)

Unframed

Paper: Natural

Printmaker: Caroline Qumaluk

Provenance:

Private Collection

Quantity: 1



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